

P K Srinivasan's efforts to popularize Ramanujan's works

P K Srinivasan became aware of the life and works of Ramanujan around 1948. He thought that Ramanujan's life had a clear message for his students; that one can reach great heights of attainment irrespective of one's background if only one is true to oneself.

PKS was always a very creative teacher, whose methods, though not very palatable to his colleagues and superiors, were very popular with his students. He had formed a band of enthusiastic students & ex-students who were ready to do anything for him.

In 1962, Government of India announced the release of a special commemoration stamp marking the 75th birthday of Ramanujan. The idea of collecting letters and reminiscences related to Ramanujan to bring out a memorial number took birth in PKS's mind around this time.

To help him pursue his dream, on Vijayadashmi Day in 1962, a committee and a group was formed by his old students. They tracked down every clue about Ramanujan's life and works, by writing to various persons and knocking at houses in suggested localities. By Dec 1962 they had a good collection of materials hitherto not seen in public. Recognizing the value of these materials, the Mathematics Department of the Madras University organized an exhibition of these materials.

On 22nd December 1962, on the birth anniversary, PKS organized a procession of about 300 students and teachers from his school, the Muthialpet High School to the Mount Road Post Office carrying placards of homage to Mathematicians of India, and bought the First Day covers and stamps. The work of the committee, as a result, became widely known, and more contacts and documents came into their possession.

But the printing of the Memorial Number had to wait for 5 years due to paucity of funds.

In 1968, the Memorial Number was brought out in 2 volumes; 'Letters & Reminiscences' and 'Ramanujan: An Inspiration'. The first was meant to be of biographical interest and the second of mathematical interest.

In his preface to Volume 1, he expresses a desire for " ... setting up a permanent memorial to Ramanujan in the shape of a multi-storied building in Madras, housing a planetarium, mathematics exhibition wings, auditorium, library and showrooms displaying applications of mathematics in industry."

It was left to Shri A.T.B Bose to bring this dream to fruition by setting up the Ramanujan Museum and Math Education Centre.

S Sundaram